tariff regime. Regulation of tariff is a function of Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) in terms of TRAI Act, 1997 and TRAI (Amendment) Act, 2000. All the telecom service providers in the country are bound to follow the Telecom Tariff Orders as notified by TRAI from time to time.

Allocation of shops and PDS dealership to SCs/STs in tribal areas

*373. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO:
SHRI RAMA MUNI REDDY SIRIGIREDDY:

Will of Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) the action taken to allocate shops and PDS dealership in tribal areas to SC/ST categories only; and

(b) the action taken to sanction loan to the allottees from the National Scheduled Caste Financial Development Corporation (N.S.F.D.C.) with sale guarantee?

THE MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHANTA KUMAR): (a) The Public Distribution System (PDS) is operated under the joint responsibility of the Central and State Governments. The licensing/ opening of Fair Price Shops arid other PDS outlets falls within the purview of the respective State Governments. However, the Government of India has suggested to the State Governments to reserve a certain percentage of Fair Price Shops and PDS outlets for persons belonging to Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes.

(b) No proposal for sanction of loans to the allottees of Fair Price Shops/PDS outlets has been received by the National Scheduled Castes Finance and Development Corporation.

Employment growth

*374. SHRIMATI SARLA MAHESHWARI: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the rate of employment growth in the country during the period 1987—1994 and 1994—2001, period wise, separately;

(b) whether it is a fact that the rate of employment growth is dwindling; and

(c) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) to (c) The rate of growth of employment in the country declined from 2.43% per annum to 1.02% per annum between the periods 1988—94 and 1994—2000. This was associated with a decline in growth of labour force from 2.29% per annum to 1.08% per annum in the same periods.

I.T. in Northern States

*375. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Northern States are far behind the Southern States in the field of Information Technology;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;

(c) what steps are being taken by Government to remove this regional imbalance; and

(d) in what manner Government plan to promote Information Technology in the Northern States?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI PRAMOD M AH A J AN): (a) No, Sir.

(b) As brought out in the Statement I, the disparity between the Northern States and the Southern States is marginal. The statewisc electronic production, which includes consumer, communication, computer, telecom, strategic and components for the year 2000 has been given at Statement-I *(See* below).

(c) and (d) The steps taken by the Government to promote the IT sector in the entire country (not merely Northern States) are given in Statement'II.